HARAMBEE FLAME

a publication of the harambee afrikan cultural organization

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# THE 'BURDEN' OF AFRICAN CONSCIOUSNESS

As those of you who are familiar with the HARAMBEE FLAME are aware, this publication has an editorial policy of not making artificial distinction between African people based upon where we happen to have been born. Our policy is to refer to all people of African ancestry as "African," whether we happen to have been born in Tanzania, for example, or in Nebraska. This is our policy(though we do not change "black," "Afro-American," and other such terms to "African" or "American-born African" when reprinting excerpts from articles from other publications, etc.) because we believe that people ought to be called what they are and also because we believe it is vitally important that we remind our African readers of an identity which far too many have either forgotten or simply can't bring themselves to face. In other words, the policy of the FLAME is designed as a tool to stimulate African consciousness.

What is African consciousness? It is an attitude whereby a person of African ancestry identifies him or herself as an African and, if he or she has an adequate level of knowledge and understanding of traditional African principles, acts according to those principles. For instance, one important traditional African principle or attitude is that of communalism, in which one's community and its collective needs take precedence over one's own needs and desires.

The HARAMBEE FLAME, like its parent, the Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization, exists for the purpose of instilling in the minds and spirits of African people a healthy pride in and knowledge and understanding of our individual and collective African selves. The accomplishment of this mission will mean the establishment of better relationships between and among African people and the paving of the road toward real freedom and self-determination. Obviously this is one hell of a big bite for us, or any other organization or publication, to chew. Nevertheless, it is our obligation to contribute to getting this job done.

What we have seen in the course of our attempts is that, while it is relatively easy for some Sisters and Brothers to learn to speak of their Africanness, it is often the case that new words are not evidenced by new deeds. Too often, folks are not mindful of the fact or forget that the things we profess are judged by those around us, as to the real value we attach to these things, on the basis of how we act.

If one professes to be an African and/or to have an African consciousness, that has certain implications. It causes people to expect, depending on their level of understanding, a particular kind of behavior from this person. If, for example,

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a Sister or Brother claims to be proud of his or her Africanness but, in anger, refers to other Sisters or Brothers as "niggers" or "stupid black...," the sincerity of that Sister or Brother's African pride necessarily and justifiably comes into question.

If, for example, an African claims to love "my people," but chooses a Caucasian for a mate or seems to have a preference for Caucasians of the complementary sex over other Africans, that person gives a signal to others that his or her love for "my people" is either an outright sham or that he or she does not understand his or her own words. This phenomenon(the apparent preference on the part of some American-born Africans, particularly males, for Caucasian mates) is particularly disturbing when it is considered that there is already a severe shortage of African men in this country. If we lived in a non-racist society in which we did not have to band together as a people to protect ourselves, the question of the nationality of one's mate would be irrelevant to the point of being absurd. We do not, however, live in such a society.

If, for example, one claims to identify with his or her African heritage but alters his African features(hair, nose, lips, etc.), that person should not take offense at remarks questioning his or sincerity.

Even though it may be true that there are African folks who exhibit questionable behavior, mannerism, etc. with respect to their professed identity who really do feel they support the interests of their Brothers and Sisters, the fact is that how we are perceived by others is as important to our ability to influence them as is who we actually are or who we think ourselves to be.

"By their deeds you shall know them."

-Wopashitwe Mondo Eyen we Langa
(aka David Rice)
Editor

# ANNOUNCEMENTS

## African Poets Vol. II

In April of this year, the Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization published a special edition of the HARAMBEE FLAME entitled "African Poets In Nebraska." Because of the favorable response we received, we shall be doing a second volume, intended for publication in October.

We want AFRICAN POETS IN NEBRASKA VOL. II to contain the work of more poets than did the first volume. We urge all of you Sisters and Brothers out there who write poems to submit your work. What kind of work are we looking for?--imaginative/creative, stimulating, thought-provoking, work that moves naturally(In other words, work that is not rendered artificial by the use of cliches or rhyme for the sake of rhyme.).

Send your submissions, with stamped, self-addressed envelope to:

AFRICAN POETS IN NEBRASKA VOL. II
HARAMBEE FLAME Editor
Harambee Afrikan Cultural Org.
P.O. Box 2500
Lincoln, NE.
68502-0500

## Fall Symposium Sep. 10

On September 10 at 5 p.m., the Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization will be holding its Fall Symposium. In keeping with what has been the focus of our educational programs over these past three months, the symposium will address, through a series of creatively self-expressive forms, our early history as African people on the African continent. We urge you to attend. For further information, write: Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization; P.O. Box 2500; Lincoln, NE.; 68502-0500.

# FROM OTHER SOURCES

## South African Government's State Of Emergency

"The real reason for the state of emergency is indisputably clear. The South African regime today is confronted with the most severe crisis and challenge to its rule since its inception. The segregated black townships, originally designed in part to facilitate the security of the regime, have become strongholds of rebellion against it. Government forces are only able to enter the townships as large armed groups, and even then they are confronted by the rocks, machetes, and gasoline bombs of the rebellious people. The local black administrations, handpicked puppets of the regime, have ceased functioning. Only five of the thirty-eight puppet councils originally established by the government still exist. Two hundred and forty town councilors, including twenty-seven township mayors, have resigned. The puppets that have not resigned are forced to live behind heavily guarded barbed-wire enclosures. The homes of 360 black police have been destroyed by the Azanian people. The only visible symbol of government authority remaining in the townships today are the heavily fortified police stations.

"...According to the LONDON TIMES, a survey conducted by a South African government-sponsored think tank, the Human Services Research Council, recently reported that not only has 'classical apartheid failed' but that at least 63 percent of the Azanian people today are now in favor of a violent struggle to overthrow the regime."

--Excerpted from an article appearing on pages 1, 14, and 15 of the July 29 edition of REVOLUTIONARY WORKER.

## Politics In Alabama

"Selma, Alabama--Voting rights activists Albert and Evelyn Turner and Spencer Hogue of Perry County, Ala. were aquitted July 5 of 29 counts of vote fraud brought by the Justice Department.

"After 20 years of struggle, Black Alabamians have elected the largest percentage of Black political leaders in the country and established an electoral organization capable of electing state representatives and senators. They have moved to consolidate local political gains within their grasp and assert political power on a regional level.

"...In five counties characterized by large Black populations(70-85%) and Black elected officials, a scourge of voting fraud investigations has targeted leading Black and white voting rights activists.

"The indictments hit hardest at the county level, where Black political organization is trongest. Local political leaders central to electoral efforts, distribution programs and local planning have been targeted for investigation in the indictments.

"Absentee ballot procedures have been the center of the vote fraud investigations. The absentee ballot is the only means for as many as 20% of the voting population in the Black Belt counties to participate. Use of absentee ballots by the elderly and those working outside the county has been critical to the establishment of Black political power in Greene and other counties.

"Greene County voters elected their first Black officeholder in 1968, and the county commission has been in Black majority control since 1971."

--Excerpted from an article by Jonathan Bennett on page 3 of the July 24 issue of THE GUARDIAN

# Reagan's Judges

"To date, the President has named only one Supreme Court justice. However, the Supreme Court usually decides fewer than one hundred cases in any single year. The Federal district courts decided nearly 300,000 cases last year. Reagan's judicial strategy since 1981 has been quite simple--to pack the district courts and the U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals with white males who generally share the views of Hall, Buchanon, and Reynolds(right-wing, anti-civil rights Reagan appointees).

"Sheldon Goldman, professor of political science at the University of Massachusetts, has documented this racist strategy in a recent article in Judicature magazine. By 1988, Reagan will have appointed about 400 federal judges, more than half of the 744 total judgeships in the U.S. These men and women, and not the Supreme Court, will decide most legal issues--from civil rights to Social Security measures.

"Reagan's 31 appointments to the Courts of Appeals are radically different(from Carter's): only 1 woman, 1 Black and one Latino. Professor Goldman adds that another factor in Reagan's selections to the courts has been social class....During Reagan's term, 19% of the district judges had under $200,000 ; 23% of them were millionaires, over five times as many as the Carter appointees. About 11% of Reagan's judges are under 40 years old, the highest percentage for any recent president."

--Excerpted from an article by Manning Marable on page 2 of the August 7, 1985 edition of THE GUARDIAN

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# Nigerian Editor Reflects On The News

"The Western nations control the vast news services--the Associated Press, United Press International, Reuters, Agence France-Presse. It is one thing to have a true information flow; it is entirely another thing to have only one kind of information. The type of information we get is determined basically by what American and European newspapers want. As a result, there is a kind of stereotyping....

"Western focus tends to be on disasters--famine in Ethiopia, earthquakes, coups. We do not quarrel with that because it may create awareness and leads to aid. But the Western press neglects other Africa news...the news you publish about Africa is mostly negative. There is little balance.

*"We(in Nigeria) have made some mistakes. One was that, like many developing countries, we believed that industrialization was the key to a balanced economy. That was a serious misconception. Before the advent of oil, Nigeria was relatively self-sufficient in food production. Our troubles started when everybody concentrated on oil. And once the capital investment is made, you cannot divest."

--Excerpted from an interview with Farouk Muhammed, editor of the DAILY TIMES of Lagos(Nigeria), which appears on pages 30-32 in the August edition of WORLD PRESS REVIEW.

*This passage from the interview cited, despite the fact that it has no direct connection with the issue of news and its reportage, because it gives some insight into why many African countries are having food-production problems.

# POETRY

## Pictures

Does it matter,
so tremendously,
if I lie sometimes.
If I paint pictures of
the world I would have exist.
Does it all mean so much to you
If I would do
away with
your institution
that leaves
SCARS ON THE MIND.

Would it hurt so very much if I
were to expose to the world
the unjustified acts you practice
on us
daily.

Before it did not matter if I tried
I had no motive
no commitment
no pride.
There was no picture,
no end,
no need to say
what is so necessary.

I possess not the polish or the skills.
But I do have the need to paint the pictures
the world
is so much in need of.
In this
I am able to find...me,
because it does matter
so tremendously.
I know.

-Hanee Ash-Shaheed Shauib
(aka Robert Toney)

# HARAMBEE

AFRIKAN CULTURAL ORGANIZATION

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